The A. F. of L. Weekly News Service gives news accounts and editorial interpretations of matters affecting labor occurring in the industrial, legislative, and judicial fields, and contains other information of benefit to the trade union movement.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

WEEKLY NEWS SERVICE

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WE PLEDGE—
1 BILLION DOLLARS
IN
WAR SAVINGS BONDS
FOR VICTORY

WHOLE NO. 1761 WILLIAM GREEN, President WASHINGTON, D. C., TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 1945 GEORGE MEANY, Secretary-Treasurer VOL. 35, NO. 2

Watt Flying To London To Attend ILO Parley On Int'l Labor Issues

Washington, D. C.—Robert J. Watt, International Representative of the AFL, left by trans-Atlantic plane for London, to attend an important meeting of the governing body of the International Labor Organization, on which he represents American workers.

The decisions of the ILO governing body may have a far-reaching effect upon the labor policies to be established in the liberated countries of Europe.

While in London, Mr. Watt is also expected to push for the early convening of a world trade union conference under the auspices of the International Federation of Trade Unions, as recommended by the recent AFL convention.

United States members of a joint maritime commission of the ILO also left for London to discuss a proposed international seamen's charter which would set minimum wage rates for the world's mercantile fleets.

Adoption of the suggested rates in other countries would, it has been pointed out, have the result of raising seamen's pay on vessels of foreign registry to levels more closely approximating the wages in the American merchant shipping industry, and would thus improve the competitive position of United States shipping.

The commission is composed of nine representatives of seamen's organizations, nine representatives of shipowners' organizations and two members of the governing body of the ILO, one representing the employers' and the other the workers' groups.

Morris Weisberger, vice-president of the Seafarers' International Union of North America, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, will be a labor delegate. John Hawks, a vice-president of the same union, will accompany Mr. Weisberger as an assistant. The CIO will not be represented at the meeting.

The minimum wages to be proposed for all seamen are based on rates of 18 pounds sterling a month for an able seaman, 22 pounds and 10 shillings for a third mate or fourth engineer, and 16 pounds for an assistant radio officer. The British pound is pegged at $4.03, United States currency.

A comparative analysis of maritime wage rates in various countries, published in November by the War Shipping Administration, reveals that United States rates for the above ratings are respectively $100, $202 and $165, and are well in advance of those paid on all foreign merchant shipping. These rates do not include war bonuses.

Other demands to be made by the seamen will be for standardized international practices regarding overtime pay, war risk and other bonuses, continuous employment, national manning pools and pay for men awaiting assignment to ships, standard hours of work, minimum manning scales, improvements in accommodation aboard ship, safety measures, medical care, social insurance, full recognition of trade unions and modernization of the legal status and rights and obligations of seamen.

Supreme Court Kills Texas Law, Upholds Piece Workers' Standards

Washington, D. C.—The United States Supreme Court dashed the hopes of the Christian-American Association and other labor enemies when it held that the Texas Anti-Labor Law, requiring the registration licensing of organizers, was unconstitutional.

Justice Wiley Rutledge, who wrote the majority opinion, held that "a requirement of registration in order to make a public speech would seem generally incompatible with an exercise of the rights of free speech and assembly."

His opinion made clear that solicitation of membership, included in the speech involved in the case at issue, was an inseparable incident of the occasion and of all "that was said and done."

The five to four decision knocks the props out of the Texas law and probably will result in the invalidation of several other State anti-labor laws modeled after the Texas pattern and inspired by the Christian-American Association.

In another important decision, the Supreme Court held that the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act applies to piece workers.

The case reached the Supreme Court on an appeal by the government from a ruling by the federal court for Southern California in favor of the Perfect Garment Company of Los Angeles, which had been charged with violation of minimum wage and overtime provisions. The district court dismissed these complaints by ruling that the Wage-Hour Act was not intended to cover the piece workers.

In recent arguments, the government held that the act had always been construed to cover piece work, and that no lower court had previously questioned this interpretation.

Many thousands of piece workers may be affected by the Supreme Court ruling. Quoting recent studies, the government said that 80 per cent of boot and shoe workers were paid on a straight piece-rate basis; 57 per cent of persons in the fur and felt hat industry; 81 per cent in the glove trades.

Justice Murphy said that neither the policy of the Wage Hour Act nor its legislative history gave any real basis for excluding piece workers from benefits. The legislation, he added, was meant to raise substandard wages and give added money for overtime work to such employes.

"No reason is apparent," he went on, "why piece workers who are underpaid or who work long hours do not fall within the spirit or intent of this statute."

Pratt Calls Conference To Draft Wage Laws For Federal Workers

Washington, D. C.—President Foster J. Pratt of the International Federation of Engineers, Architects and Draftsmen's Unions, has invited all AFL affiliates with members working in the Federal service to join in a conference in AFL headquarters Jan. 15 to 17 on drafting a new legislative program.

"The wage problems of workers in the Federal service are more serious now than any other group in the country, including white collar workers," Mr. Pratt said. "Their pay is still based upon the Classification Act of 1923.

"No one else has been hit harder by increased living costs and wartime inflation because Federal pay scales have not kept pace with wages in private industry. These employes can't go to their immediate supervisor and ask for increases. They have to wait for Congress to pass a law.

"That's what we're holding this conference for. We're going to draft new wage laws for federal workers and then we're going out and ask Congress to adopt them."

Among those invited to the conference besides representatives of Mr. Pratt's union are President William C. Doherty, of the National Association of Letters Carriers; President C. M. Harvey, of the Railway Mail Association; President James B. Burns of the American Federation of Government Employes; President Fred Baer, of the International Fire Fighters Association; President James Landis, of the American Federation of Teachers; N. P. Alifas, representing members of the International Association of Machinists employed in navy yards, and President John Locher, of the Washington Central Labor Union.

Old Age Insurance Now Provides Coverage For 39 Million Persons

Washington, D. C.—More than 39,000,000 American men and women will enter 1945 with insured status in the old-age and survivors insurance program of the Social Security Act, according to a year-end summary of operations presented by Arthur J. Altmeyer, Chairman of the Social Security Board.

Under the old-age and survivors insurance program, the monthly benefit rolls rose to 1,120,000 men, women and children, eligible to receive $20,500,000 monthly. The figures were estimated as of December 31.

Monthly benefit payments were awarded to 324,000 new applicants during the year, and lump-sum benefit payments were made to 208,000 survivors of insured workers who left no one immediately entitled to monthly benefits. The estimated total of old-age and survivors insurance payments certified for 1944 was $196,100,000 in monthly benefits and $22,400,000 in lump sums.

More than 60 per cent of the monthly beneficiaries are women and children, counting some women who have retired and claimed benefits in their own right, rather than on account of a retired or deceased husband.

Wage credits towards future benefits were earned during the year by 48,000,000 workers for themselves and their families, and the total of persons with some wages credited to their accounts is now approximately 70,000,000. New accounts were set up during 1944 for 4,500,000 workers.

Sharp cutbacks, if accompanied by widespread lay-offs of older workers, Altmeyer said, could practically double the benefit rolls within a year. More than 700,000 men and women past age 65 are in fully insured status and have not claimed benefits but could do so any day.

TUNE IN, JAN. 14

Washington, D. C. — If you would like to listen to one of radio's punchiest and timely forum programs, tune in Jan. 14 to "America United," the American Federation of Labor's new radio show.

The topic will be "Jobs for All When the War Ends." The invited guest will be Senator James E. Murray, of Montana, author of the bill to guarantee jobs for all under the Federal budget.

Debate on the Senator's proposals will take place by the members of the America United Panel, including Phil Pearl for the AFL; Dr. Emerson P. Schmidt, U. S. Chamber of Commerce, and Albert S. Gold, master of the National Grange.

Don't forget. Tune in Jan. 14 to your local NBC station at 1:15 P. M., Eastern War Time.

SENATE SEEKS PLAN ON NATION'S HEALTH

Committee Exposes Disgraceful Conditions Which Hurt War Effort

Washington, D. C. — Disgraceful health conditions in America were exposed by a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Education and Labor in a report to Congress.

Signed by Senator Claude Pepper (Dem., Fla.), Senator Elbert D. Thomas (Dem., Utah) and Senator Robert M. La Follette, Jr. (Prog., Wis.), the report summarizes what the committee discovered in a study conducted last year.

It declares that, because of defects, injuries and illnesses which could have been prevented had medical care been available to all the people, the nation suffered heavy losses in manpower, both for the armed services and for industry.

More than 4,500,000 young men "in the prime of life" were found to be absolutely unfit for military service, and more than a million have been discharged from service because of defects other than those sustained in battle, the committee said.

Another million and a half men now in uniform were rendered fit for service only through medical and dental care given after they were inducted.

In all, the committee estimated that at least 40 per cent of men of military age are handicapped by preventable defects, or more than twice the number of men we now have overseas.

In 1943, the committee said, illness caused a loss of more than 600,000,000 man-days of labor. This, it was emphasized, was 47 times the amount of time lost through strikes and lockouts of all kinds in that year.

By way of remedies, the committee made a number of relatively minor recommendations, including Federal grants to states to assist in the construction of hospitals and medical centers. It deferred judgment on a health insurance program, as proposed by the Wagner-Dingell bill, before the last session of Congress and indicated this matter would be discussed in a subsequent report.

However, the committee suggested that health insurance is one way—and may be the only effective way—of dealing with the terrific problem it outlines.

"Full employment and adequate social security are indispensable to a truly effective health program," the report said. "We should begin planning now for the reconversion period. Further delay will postpone orderly solution of our health problems.

"We have seen what neglect of opportunities for health and physical fitness has cost us during the war. We should resolve now that never again, either in war or in peace, will the nation be similarly handicapped."

LABOR FOES PREPARING NEW ANTI-UNION DRIVE

Houston, Tex.—Labor's enemies are still battling hard to enslave the nation's workers with laws crippling the operation of trade unions.

It was disclosed that the headquarters of the notorious Christian-American Association has sent out a letter to its anti-labor supporters boasting of the ban against the union shop adopted by Florida and Arkansas at the polls last November. The letter, signed by Vance Muse, secretary-treasurer of the Association, said:

"We will see that the matter is given proper consideration in the other forty-six States just as fast as we can get around to it. Thirty-two State Legislatures, by memorializing Congress, can compel the submission of the "right-to-work" amendment to the Federal Constitution."

Labor Draft Seems Headed For Defeat As Green Leads Fight On Compulsion

Fenton Hits "Hysteria," Says Manpower Squeeze Is Local

Washington, D. C. — National Organization Director Frank Fenton, who serves as the AFL representative on the War Manpower Commission's management-labor committee, declared that an "unwarranted hysteria" over manpower was disturbing employers throughout the country.

He contended the difficulties were strictly of a local and specific nature. He also said that official figures refuted statements that unusually large numbers of workers had voluntarily left war production for peace-time jobs.

Mr. Fenton insisted there is no general manpower shortage. "I don't like substituting hysteria for common sense," he said. "This is disturbing all employers in the country, when the problem is specific bottlenecks. Our problem is the utilization of existing manpower and skills."

Mr. Fenton said his entire organization staff in the field is committed to the current manpower recruiting and channeling program. Labor did not subscribe to some of the Government's methods of attacking manpower problems, he said, but "we made up our minds we would obey our Government and go along and do the best we can."

As an example of compulsion he opposed, he cited the enforcement of employment ceilings in less-essential industries. Mr. Fenton said that if an employer with 800 workers is ordered to cut his force to 500, most likely he will lay off his most inefficient help, or his oldest employes, or women. He contended that the result would be a pool of unemployed rather than an increase in the munitions labor force because many, if not all, of those laid off would not be useful in munitions.

Instead, Mr. Fenton advocated that local management-labor committees tackle the problem. Employers producing less-essential goods would be called in and asked to lend a specific number and type of workers to plants critically in need of such help to meet munitions schedules.

Referring to impressions that large numbers of workers were quitting munitions for peacetime jobs, Mr. Fenton cited findings of the Bureau of Labor Statistics which showed that the quit rate in all other manufacturing was at least 1 percentage point higher than in munitions every month in 1944 through September.

Office Workers Get Int'l Charter

Cincinnati—Declaring that "this is an historic occasion in labor history," AFL President William Green presented an international union charter here to the first convention of the newly formed Office Employes International Union.

More than a hundred delegates, representing 50,000 workers organized into 150 local unions throughout the country, were in attendance at the convention.

"You are the pioneers in the establishment of this union," Mr. Green told them, "just as the early pioneers established our country on this continent. This is not merely an incident in your life. It is a great historic event, a great experience.

"At this convention we are launching a movement among the white collar workers of the country which will mean a new life for many of them and higher standards of living."

The charter was accepted in behalf of the union by J. Howard Hicks, who served as president of the International Council of Office Employes Unions which set the foundation for the international union.

Mr. Green predicted that the union can become the largest single trade union in the world if it succeeds in organizing eligible workers.

AFL Organization Director Frank Fenton is presiding over the convention pending the adoption of a constitution and the election of officers.

SEAMEN SKIP HOLIDAYS TO KEEP SHIPS SAILING

Washington, D. C.—No merchant ship missed convoy during the holiday season as thousands of American merchant seamen and officers voluntarily returned to the sea to maintain the unbroken supply line of ships sailing to the fighting fronts, the War Shipping Administration announced. Men on shore leave responded to urgent appeals carried in the newspapers and broadcast over the radio and sacrificed opportunities to spend the holidays with their families. In previous years the departure of some ships was delayed by the shortage of experienced personnel during the holiday season, WSA said.

"The response of these men to the appeal that they return to duty immediately was magnificent," said Captain Macauley, Deputy War Shipping Administrator.

AFL WINS CANNERY VOTE

Hillsboro, Ore.—The American Federation of Labor's Cannery Workers won an election among employes of the B. E. Maling Cannery here by more than a two to one margin. The vote was 189 for the union to only 83 against.

Text of Pres. Green's Statement

Text of President William Green's statement opposing renewed demands for national service legislation follows:

"Throughout the war period, the American Federation of Labor and its members have demonstrated their willingness and desire to do everything possible to increase production and promote the war effort.

"The results prove the soundness of the fundamental American principle that free labor is more efficient and more productive than slave labor. In no country where compulsory service is exacted from the people can the production record match ours.

"Organizations of American industry and agriculture have joined with labor in opposing compulsory service because of a deep conviction that it would not be practical or helpful to the war effort.

"Labor still is reluctant to approve or support national service legislation which provides for compulsion.

"We doubt the need for such legislation. We fear that it will create confusion, adversely affect morale and hinder the smooth functioning of the war production program.

"Enactment of such legislation cannot increase the manpower supply nor do we believe it will promote effective use of available manpower.

"On the other hand, it may result in decreased efficiency and lower individual production.

"The better course to pursue would be to seek ways and means by which we can improve utilization of the available manpower supply through voluntary methods. Labor will cooperate to the fullest extent in facilitating the transfer of workers from non-essential industries to critical war plants."

Industry, Farmers Join With Labor Against National Service Scheme

Washington, D. C.—Industry and agriculture joined with labor on the AFL's first radio program of 1945 in opposing the President's recommendation for national service legislation.

At the same time representatives of all groups, speaking on the "America United" program on a nation-wide NBC network, agreed on the necessity of all-out voluntary effort on the part of workers, employers and farmers to back up our fighting forces with everything they need for victory.

Phil Pearl, representing the AFL on the opening forum, disclosed the Federation's program to "lend-lease" workers from non-essential industries to critical war plants.

Dr. Emerson P. Schmidt, representing the United States Chamber of Commerce, declared that industry would be glad to cooperate with labor in this program.

For the farmers, Paul Sifton, representing the National Farmers Union, called for more effective utilization of farm labor and farm machinery, now that the Selective Service System is drafting more and more farm boys into the armed services.

Discussing the President's request to Congress for a national service act involving compulsion, Pearl said:

"The important thing to remember is that no legislation, not even compulsory service, will create more manpower. Its purpose is to get more effective use of manpower. If labor felt such a law would accomplish this purpose, we would agree to go along. But we emphatically don't think so."

Dr. Schmidt said:

"We agree with you. Our production under a voluntary method has exceeded that of our enemies or our allies with their compulsory laws. The Government itself has not yet reduced non-essential work greatly. Some businesses are hoarding labor. Let us cut out the waste and labor hoarding before we use coercion."

Sifton also agreed that labor, industry and the farmers can "deliver the goods" with better cooperation from the Government and a more clear and consistent picture of the nation's production needs. He warned that for all of us on the home front who believe sincerely in voluntary action as against compulsion, the time has come to "fish or cut bait."

The program opened with a brief talk by Lieut. Gen. W. D. Styer, Chief of Staff of the Army Service Forces, who outlined the most critical war production needs of the armed forces. At the conclusion of his talk, the general answered questions from the members of the panel, who then proceeded with their forum discussion. Printed copies of the program can be obtained free of charge by writing to Ransdell, Inc., printers, Washington, D. C.

FDR Outlines Broad Post-War Plan, Including Jobs For All, To Congress

Washington, D. C. — President Roosevelt outlined a sweeping and constructive post-war program to Congress in his annual message on the state of the nation. The program, incorporating his economic "bill of rights" included:

1—Jobs for all at good wages.
2—Full production by free enterprise.
3—Huge housing and public works programs.
4—Widening of social security to cover all Americans and broadening its scope to include health and education programs.
5—Revision of post-war taxes to encourage business investment.

In his message to Congress, the President declared the adoption of the "economic bill of rights" will establish "a new basis of security and prosperity" in America for all its citizens, regardless of station, race or creed. He added:

"Of these rights the most fundamental, and one on which the fulfillment of the others in a large degree depends, is the "right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the nation." In turn, others of the economic rights of American citizenship, such as the right to a decent home, to a good education, to good medical care, to social security, to reasonable farm income will, if fulfilled, make major contributions to achieving adequate levels of employment.

"The Federal Government must see to its that these rights become realities—with the help of states, municipalities, business, labor and agriculture.

"We have had full employment during the war. We have had it because the government has been ready to buy all the materials of war which the country could produce—and this has amounted to approximately half our present productive capacity.

"After the war we must maintain full employment, with government performing its peacetime functions. This means that we must achieve a level of demand and purchasing power by private consumers—farmers, business men, workers, professional men, housewives—which is sufficiently high to replace wartime government demands; and it means also that we must greatly increase our export trade above the pre-war level.

"Our policy is, of course, to rely as much as possible on private enterprise to provide jobs. But the American people will not accept mass unemployment or mere makeshift work. There will be need for the work of everyone willing and able to work—and that means close to 60,000,000 jobs.

"Full employment means not only jobs, but productive jobs. Americans do not regard jobs that pay substandard wages are productive jobs.

"Our full-employment program requires the extensive development of our natural resources and other useful public works. The undeveloped resources of this continent are still vast. Our river-watershed projects will add new and fertile territories to the United States. The TVA, which was constructed at a cost of $750,000,000—the cost of waging this war for less than four days—was a bargain. We have similar opportunities in our other great river basins. By harnessing the resources of these river basins, as we have in the Tennessee Valley, we shall provide the same kind of stimulus to enterprise as was provided by the Louisiana Purchase and the new discoveries in the West during the nineteenth century.

"If we are to avail ourselves fully of the benefits of civil aviation and if we are to use the automobiles we can produce, it will be necessary to construct thousands of airports and to overhaul our entire national highway system.

"The provision of a decent home for every family is a national necessity if this country is to be worthy of its greatness—and that task will itself create great employment opportunities. Most of our cities need extensive rebuilding. Much of our farm plant is in a state of disrepair. To make a frontal attack on the problems of housing and urban reconstruction will require thoroughgoing cooperation between industry and labor, and the Federal, State and local governments.

"An expanded Social Security program and adequate health and education programs must play essential roles in a program designed to support individual productivity and mass purchasing power. I shall communicate further with the Congress on these subjects at a later date."

Congress Balking On FDR Plan For Bill As United Opposition Jells

Washington, D. C.—With opposition crystallizing from many sources, President Roosevelt's recommendation for immediate enactment of compulsory national service legislation appeared doomed to defeat by Congress.

AFL President William Green led the attack on the proposal, declaring results have proved that free labor, operating under the American voluntary system, can and will outproduce the enemy's slave labor methods.

Mr. Green insisted that every effort be made to improve utilization of available manpower by cooperation between management and labor before compulsion is exerted by the Government.

Spokesmen for industry and agriculture agreed wholeheartedly with labor's position. In the first AFL radio program of the year, "America United," representatives of the United States Chamber of Commerce and the National Farmers Union demanded that hoarding and wastage of labor be eliminated before recourse is taken to extreme methods.

In the face of this united opposition to compulsory service, members of Congress were dubious that the law recommended by the President could be passed and they were inclined to go ahead with other portions of his manpower program before tackling national service legislation. Thus the prospects appeared to be that action would be delayed and the measure finally defeated, especially if the war situation improves in the next few weeks.

Meanwhile, the AFL pushed ahead with its own program for transferring needed workers from non-essential industries to war plants making critically needed supplies.

Lewis G. Hines, in charge of this program, declared reports from the field have been "very encouraging." He said the War Department had submitted a list of eighty-four plants urgently requiring 45,000 workers. More than a third of these workers, he estimated, already have been assigned by affiliated unions and are working on the new jobs.

President Harry Stevenson of the Molder's Union reported to Hines that two of the plants on the list had been tied up by local strikes and that he had successfully negotiated settlements. With production resumed, Stevenson came to Washington to confer with War Department and War Labor Board officials regarding new wage regulations which are designed to encourage more workers to take jobs in foundries.

President H. A. Bradley of the Chemical Workers International Union, informed Hines that he had rushed more than 1,100 workers into plants and laboratories designated as "critical" by the War Department. He declared that the union was ready and willing to fulfill all assignments of this nature.

The Metal Polishers Union also announced a clean slate on its portion of the program, having sent a group of workers at the War Department's request to a plant at Belleville, N. J.

The International Association of Machinists and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers received the heaviest calls for more help and are facing the toughest job in finding workers, Hines disclosed.

While hesitant about national service legislation, Congress jumped into action immediately on the President's request for "work-or-fight" legislation affecting 4-F draft registrants.

Immediate hearings were scheduled on a bill introduced by Chairman May of the House Military Affairs Committee requiring 4-F's to take jobs in vital war industries or face induction into the armed forces and compulsory assignment to such jobs.

Newspapers reported greatly increased applications for jobs in war plants following the President's appeal. If this movement is sustained, the manpower crisis may be alleviated by mere cracking of the whip. Observers in the Capital were inclined to believe the President anticipated this effect and hoped to get results from the threat of punitive action, even if no legislation is adopted. It was recalled that the President linked his national service proposal a year ago to an economic and post-war program considered unpalatable to Congressional majorities and the impression is that he didn't expect it to be approved. There are some members of Congress who don't believe he expects the bill to be adopted at this session either.

PLANE OUTPUT HIT NEW HIGH IN 1944

Washington, D. C.—In a production effort corresponding to the record-breaking achievements of other war industries last year, the country's aircraft plants turned out 96,369 planes of all types in 1944, with a total air-frame weight of 1,112,000,000 pounds, J. A. Krug, chairman of the War Production Board, announced in a year-end report.

Even with planned reductions in aircraft production undertaken as early as last summer, when the first cutbacks were announced, the output in 1944 was substantially greater than the previous record of 85,946 planes delivered in 1943. In air-frame weight, the achievement was even more impressive, since total weight of all planes last year exceeded by about 59 per cent their total air-frame weight in 1943.